

## Claude Monet (1840-1926)

When the **Impressionist** painters first offered their pictures to the public eye in the 1870s, they were greeted with incomprehension and disapproval. Monet's painting *Impression, Sunrise* (1872) provided one critic with the key word for his pejorative article entitled "L'Exposition des Impressionnistes". Thus was born the name of an artistic movement, which by the turn of the century had established itself as pointing the way forward.



(1860 photo)

**Claude Monet** is regarded as the most important of the Impressionists. His landscapes are the embodiment of what is commonly thought of as **Impressionist** painting. Impressionist theory claims that we do not see an object as such, but rather the light in which it appears to us. Thus

Monet, for instance, painted the portal of Rouen Cathedral at various times of day and under different weather conditions, showing us how the changing light affects its appearance.



(1867 portrait)

In his paintings of the sea and of his motifs from nature—landscapes, flowers and ultimately the water lilies in his greatest pictures from Giverny—Monet sought to capture the instant of a particular natural manifestation. In his opinion, it was the task of the artist "to represent what stands between the object and the artist, which is the beauty of the atmosphere, the impossible". Through his paintings, Monet was to come closer than almost any other artist to this—admittedly unattainable—aim.



(1886 self-portrait)

**Note:** *Claude Monet was an artist by trade. He never earned money from anything but his paintings. He began at school selling caricatures of his teachers. All his feelings from happiness with his family to the painful death of his wife, Camille, turned into subjects for paintings. It seems that he didn't know how to express himself except on a canvas.*

## The Exhibit

(Vertical prints, back wall in Periodical Room, left to right)

**Water Lilies (1916-1919)** *"My sensitivity, far from diminishing, has been sharpened by age, which holds no fears for me so long as unbroken communication with the outside world continues to fuel my curiosity, so long as my hand remains a ready and faithful interpreter of my perception."*

## Women with a Parasol (facing left) (1886)

*Eleven years after he had painted his wife Camille and their son Jean at Argenteuil, Monet was tempted again by the same subject. His step daughter Suzanne Hoschedé posed for him until she was exhausted.*

## Water-Lily Pond: Symphony in Green

(1899) *"They are bringing the canvases to me one after the other. A color that I had found and sketched on one of these canvases yesterday reappears in the air. I am quickly given this painting and strive to fix this vision as permanently as possible. But it usually vanishes as fast as it sprang up, making way for another color I had already painted days ago on another study instantly put in front of me... And that is the way it is all day long."*

**Women in the Garden (1866-1867)** In 1870 Monet married his model, Camille Doncieux, who had given him his son, Jean (1867-1914); in 1878 their second son, Michel, was born. Camille posed for many paintings of Monet, including each of the four people in this painting.

## The Exhibit

(Horizontal prints, front wall outside Periodical Room, left to right)

**The Reader (1872)** Monet came back to Paris but the country is threatened by war. Like most artists, Claude Monet went into exile. He went first to London and then to the Netherlands where he acquired his first Japanese engravings. Back to France, the Monets settled in Paris. They moved to Argenteuil (Paris suburbs) in January 1872. As soon as spring came back Claude Monet painted this portrait probably representing his wife, Camille.

**Water-Lilies, Evening Effect (1897)** *"Suddenly I had the revelation of how magical my pond is. I took up my palette. Since that time I have scarcely had any other model."*

**Summer (1874) (Meadow at Bezons)** Monet loved to paint nature and landscapes, but also liked painting people in beautiful surroundings. He was using short brush strokes, which often looked rather like spots of paint, not lines. Often, when you looked

*at his painting from a short distance you couldn't see what it was, but if you stepped away you could see a beautiful scene. This was a completely new way of painting that became the mark of **Impressionism**.*

**Red Boats, Argenteuil (1875)** Claude Monet was fascinated by the bright light of summer mornings. He shared it with the spectator through this bright red, blue and green composition.

**The Luncheon (1873)** *"The Luncheon" reflects the family happiness at Argenteuil. A quiet summer afternoon, Jean Monet is sitting on the ground and playing, Camille appears in the background.*

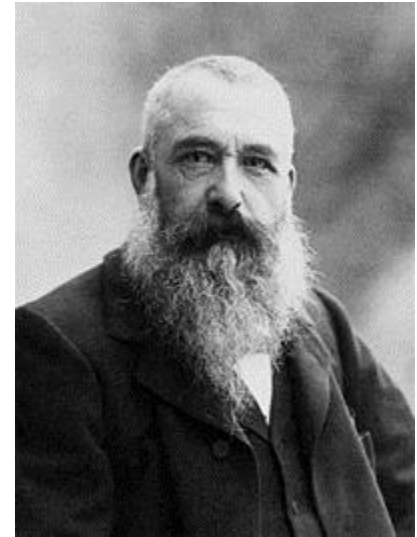
**Houses of Parliament, Effect of Sunlight in the Fog (1900-1901)** *"I can't send you any canvas from London, because for the work I'm doing I need to have them all under my eyes, then what I'm doing here is very delicate." Claude Monet to Paul Durand-Ruel.*

**Pears and Grapes (1880)** Claude Monet took up still-life painting for a time around 1880. This traditional genre may seem an unlikely arena in which to stage a career shift, but Monet hoped to expand his market during a period of economic recession. In addition to being easier to sell than landscapes, still life allowed the artist to continue his experimentation with the textures and colors of nature during periods when bad weather prohibited him from painting outdoors.

**Poppies at Argenteuil (1873)** Claude Monet arrived in Argenteuil on January 2nd 1872. In those days Argenteuil was a small town of 8000 inhabitants surrounded by fields. *"Poppies at Argenteuil"* was exhibited with *"Impression, Sunrise"* at the 1874 exhibition of the photographer Nadar. It is one of Claude Monet's most famous paintings, perhaps because Camille seems to swim in flowers.

Impressionist Painter

# Claude Monet



(1899 photograph)

An Exhibit of Art Prints  
Representing  
Notable Works  
Over the Life  
of His Career

Shelton State Community College  
Summer 2010

*"I'm thinking all the time about my painting, and if I knew I were about to miss it, I think I would turn crazy."* Claude Monet